

The damage done by yellow-legged herring gull predation, which had increased very seriously, particularly to Avocets, was discussed. Peter Olney wondered how much of the decrease in Avocets was also due to changes in the salinity in areas affected by the crystallisation process.

The South African races of the hemipode *Turnix sylvatica* (Desfontaines)

by P. A. CLANCEY

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Since its description nearly thirty years ago, *Turnix sylvatica arenaria* Stresemann, 1938: plateau of Erongo Mts., north-western South-West Africa, has been discussed only once, by Macdonald (1957), and has only been accepted as valid by Hoesch and Niethammer (1940) and Winterbottom (1964). Ten years before Stresemann named *T.s. arenaria*, Roberts (1928) drew attention to the pale nature of South-West African specimens.

In my recent *Catalogue of Birds of the South African Sub-Region* (Clancey 1965), I queried *T.s. arenaria* and placed it in the synonymy of *T.l. lepurana* (Smith), 1836: western Transvaal, on the basis that birds exactly like those of northern South-West Africa occurred in eastern Botswana (Bechuanaland), western Rhodesia, and even the Transvaal. In the light of Winterbottom's recent comments on the discreteness of *T.s. arenaria*, I have gone fully into the matter of variation in the southern and central African populations of this hemipode, using the pooled specimen resources of all the major southern African museums. The material finally brought together, some one hundred and forty-one specimens, shows that two races of *T. sylvatica* require to be recognised in zoogeographical South Africa, and that *T.s. arenaria* is valid, as claimed by Winterbottom. In so far as this race is concerned, it is now found to have an extensive breeding range from South-West Africa, east certainly to north-eastern Botswana, occurring seasonally east of this between May and early December, when it ranges to the Transvaal, Rhodesia, and Zambia. *T.s. lepurana* is likewise subject to post-breeding movement, as revealed by the occurrence of specimens of this race from localities in South-West Africa which lie within the established breeding range of the paler *T.s. arenaria*.

Ortygis lepurana A. Smith, 1836, was described from specimens collected in the western Transvaal to the north of Kurrichaine=Zeerust, in which general area *T.s. arenaria* occurs seasonally, but the name is incontrovertibly applicable to the eastern assemblage of populations, though from information given by Smith in his *Illustrations of the Zoology of South Africa*, Aves, pl. xvi, 1838, and text, it is clear that the paratypical material also contained examples of *T.s. arenaria*. The female figure on the stated plate is a fairly accurate representation of the pale *arenaria*, while the male figure is of *lepurana*. However, Smith's reference in the original description to the back feathers being edged with greyish is diagnostic of *lepurana* as interpreted here, the edgings being creamy or buffy-white in *arenaria*.

The characters and ranges of the two races of *T. sylvatica* occurring in the South African Sub-Region are as follows:

(a) *Turnix sylvatica lepurana* (Smith)

Ortygis Lepurana A. Smith, *Rep. Exped. Expl. Centr. Afr.*, 1836, p. 55: country north of Kurrichaine=western Transvaal.

♀. Frons, lateral coronal surfaces, side of neck and face creamy-white, heavily scaled with black; upper mantle about Hazel (Ridgway [1912], pl. xiv), the feathers edged with Grayish Olive (pl. xlvi); lower mantle, scapulars and tertials Hazel, margined with Grayish Olive and cross-barrred with brownish-black. Below, lower throat and upper and mid-breast saturated Clay Color (pl. xxix), this diffused downwards over the flanks; sides of lower neck and breast creamy-white, the feathers with round sub-apical spots of black. ♂ smaller than ♀. Upperparts somewhat darker and duller, showing less hazel or vinaceous-brown, and with the blackish-brown crossbarring extending over the entire mantle, and with the mantle, scapular and tertial feathers usually narrowly edged on both vanes with creamy-white. Below, with paler and less extensive rusty over the lower throat and breast (about Cinnamon-Buff [pl. xxix] in most).

Wings of 10 ♂♂ 83-90 (86.4), of 10 ♀♀ 76.5-82.5 (79.8) mm.

Material examined: 86. Eastern Cape Province, 7; Natal and Zululand, 5; Mozambique, 1; Transvaal, 10; Orange Free State, 1; Rhodesia, 21; Malawi, 20; Zambia, 15 (a ♀ from Chadiza at 14° 05' S., 32° 25' E. has deep rusty flanks); Botswana, 3 (Tamafuli [15 May]; Tsepe (16 Jan.); Ramutsamusa Plain (4 Feb.); South-West Africa, 3 Mariental (22 May); "Quickborn", Okahandja (11 May); Namutoni (8 Aug.).

Range: South-West Africa in Great Namaqualand (the ♀ from Mariental was with egg) and Damaraland highlands, northern and eastern Cape, Natal and Zululand, Mozambique, Swaziland, Orange Free State, eastern Botswana, Transvaal, and Rhodesia, to northern P.E.A. Malawi, Zambia, and Angola. Material at present available has not enabled me to define the range accurately north of these limits. *T.s. lepurana* is usually credited with a range which extends throughout much of Ethiopian Africa outside the limits of unbroken forest, and south-western Arabia.

Sclater (1924) recognised *T.s. alleni* Mearns, 1911: N'Guaso Nyiro R., Kenya, as a race extending from West Africa, east to Uganda and Mt. Kenya, but various workers have pronounced *T.s. alleni* as inseparable from *T.s. lepurana*.

Remarks: In South-West Africa, Hoesch and Niethammer (1940) record this race from Kayas, near Etosha, on 18 and 21 July.

(b) *Turnix sylvatica arenaria* Stresemann

Turnix sylvatica arenaria Stresemann, *Ornith. Monatsber.*, vol. xlvi, 1938, p. 26: plateau of Erongo Mts., north-western South-West Africa.

♀. Frons, lateral coronal surfaces, sides of neck and face less heavily scaled with black than last race; medial coronal streak broader and whiter; rest of upperparts wholly paler, the upper mantle about Tawny (pl. xv), the feathers edged pale greyish-buff; remainder of mantle, scapulars, tertials, rump and upper tail-coverts somewhat yellower or more sandy, less vinaceous, the feathers being about Tawny-Olive (pl. xxix), variably transversely barred with blackish-brown and edged on both vanes with creamy or buffy-white, imparting a streaked effect. On underside, with

slightly paler rusty over the lower throat and breast, and with the lateral neck and breast spotting finer, the individual spots more sagittate, less rounded. In the wings, the coverts have the black sub-apical speckling less extensive, with a corresponding increase in the extent of the off-white margining. ♂ subspecific differences slightly better marked than in ♀. Medial coronal streak broader and whiter than in *T.s. lepurana*: rest of upperparts paler and yellower (Tawny-Olive), the cross-barring heavier and somewhat blacker, but pale edging to both vanes broader, resulting in a more strongly streaked and cryptically marked dorsal facies. Face whiter. Below, with paler rusty over breast, and spotting to sides of neck and breast finer. With reduced blackish speckling to coverts, and pale edging of same more extensive.

Wings of 10 ♂♂ 85–91 (87.4), of 10 ♀♀ 75–81.5 (78.8) mm.

Material examined: 55. South-West Africa, 11 (Windhoek, Okahandja, Sesfontein, Etosha, Grootfontein); Botswana, 17 (Kai-Kai and district, Lake Ngami, Makarikari, Nata); northern Cape, 1 (Kuruman); Transvaal, 4 Hector Spruit (21 July), Leydsdorp (22 July), Marabastad (3 Dec.), Pienaar's River (10 Sept.); Lesotho, 1 (Mamathe's [21 Nov.]); Rhodesia, 17 (Bulawayo [7 July–16 Oct.], Nyamandhlovu (15 June), Goromonzi (23 Aug.), Dorset Siding (14 Aug.), Nyahuvu, Headlands (7 July–19 Oct.), Salisbury (14 Nov.), Chiawa (19 June), Que Que (Oct.); Zambia, 4. Choma (30 July), Lochinvar (17 July), Makulu (12 Aug.), Chasefu, Lundazi (May).

Range: Namib edge of western Damaraland and northern South-West Africa in northern Damaraland, the Kaokoveld, and Ovamboland, east to the Lake Ngami region, the Kalahari, and north-eastern Botswana in the Makarikari Salt Lake and Nata R. sectors. Also presumably in arid south-western and parts of southern Angola. Ranges east and south of the breeding range during the cold dry months, mainly between May and early December, then reaching the Transvaal, Rhodesia, and Zambia; probably elsewhere.

Remarks: Hoesch and Niethammer (1940) list *T.s. arenaria* from the Erongo Mts., Karibib, Ombujomatemba, and Rietfontein, in South-West Africa. The specimens listed by Winterbottom (1964) were made available for this research.

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ADDENDUM

Through the kindness of Major Melvin A. Traylor, Associate Curator of Birds, Field Museum of Natural History, Chicago, I have been able to examine a further forty-one specimens of *T. sylvatica* from Africa, the specimens being mainly from Angola, Zambia, the Kasai, Congo, Tanzania, Kenya and Uganda. These specimens show that birds indistinguishable from *T. s. lepurana* range more or less throughout Ethiopian Africa, and *T. s. alleni* Mearns is without doubt a synonym. A single bird from Huila, in southern Angola, dated 6th November, 1954, is attributable to *T. s. arenaria*, showing that this race does in fact range into southern Angola as surmised. A second example from the Luachi R., in western Zambia, taken on 9th November, 1961, is also *T. s. arenaria*, which has already been recorded in the main paper on the southern African races of this hemipode as extending seasonally into Zambia.

A singleton from Isiolo, N.F.D., Kenya, is very like *T. s. arenaria* and probably represents a pale xeric form analogous in its main characters to the southern desertic race, which ranges throughout the Somali Arid District, the south-western Arabian peninsula, and, perhaps, the whole of the arid savanna belt lying immediately to the south of the Sahara. Mearns apparently confused similar pale birds to the Isiolo specimen with *T. s. lepurana* when naming *T. s. alleni*.

Seafowl observed on a voyage, Capetown to London, 23rd January to 8th February 1967

by CHARLES R. S. PITMAN

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GENERAL. The day to day details of this voyage, which provided an interesting comparison with the observations (*Bull. B.O.C.* 87 (3), March, 1967) made on this route in the reverse direction—London to Capetown—26th April to 12th May, 1966, are with the Royal Naval Bird Watching Society. Las Palmas, Gran Canaria, was the sole port of call. It was not the season for land migrants and the only land birds which came aboard were two Blackbirds, *Turdus merula* which were flying about the ship for about an hour (0800-0900 hrs.) on 7th February, when approaching and off the Isle of Wight.

Seafowl to a great extent were absent throughout the voyage with the exception of the day—and especially the evening—after leaving Capetown, when (some 370 miles north of Capetown) there was a steady southerly drift of two species of shearwaters and two species of petrels presumably to their southern or Antarctic breeding grounds; the day before (31st January), passing Dakar when Cory's (or Mediterranean) Shearwaters moving north and skuas were active in the p.m.; the day Dakar was passed (1st February) when three species of skua followed; and the following day (2nd February) briefly in the late evening when Little (or Dusky) Shearwaters were active. A few hundred gulls of three species were noisily attendant as our ship awaited entry into Las Palmas harbour. Gulls which followed after Las Palmas, though seasonal, are regarded as common-place. Observations were rarely made between 1400 and 1630 hours: